

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W

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R 100853Z JUL 75Q

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1337

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 5157

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PINS KS

SUBJECT: CALL ON CARDINAL KIM

REF: A SEOUL 4740; B SEOUL 4984

1. LABATT JUNE 9 PAID FAREWELL CALL ON CARDINAL KIM (AT CARDINAL'S REQUEST). CARDINAL USED OCCASION TO REVIEW CURRENT STATE OF STATE/CHURCH RELATIONS AND PERSONAL VIEWS ON KOREAN PROSPECT. HE BEGAN BY TALKING ABOUT KIN CHI-HA TRIAL, WHICH VERY MUCH ON HIS MIND. HE SAID THAT REACTION TO A DEATH SENTENCE FOR KIM COULD TEAR CHURCH APART. THEREFORE HE IS NOW HOLDING KIM'S REPUDIATION OF HIS ALLEGED "CONFESSION" IN RESERVE FOR USE DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES. HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT EMBASSY KNOWLEDGE OF EXISTENCE OF THIS DOCUMENT NOT BE PUBLICIZED SINCE IT COULD "AFFECT LIFE OF POET".

2. NEXT CARDINAL KIM COMMENTED THAT ROKG IS NOW WILLING TO MINIMIZE CHURCH/STATE FRICTION AND HAD AGREED TO LET FATHER YI KI-CHONG LEAVE FOR ROME ON JUNE 27 RATHER THAN MAKE HIM STAND TRIAL FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH STUDENT PROTESTS (REFTELS). HE HAD NOT BEEN HAPPY ABOUT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT, BUT THOUGHT THIS WAS BETTER THAN THE DIVISIVE EFFECT  
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OF HAVING A PRIEST ON TRIAL FOR SUBVERSION. FATHER

YI HAD TOLD HIM THAT WHILE HE HAD BEEN COUNSELOR AND ADVISOR TO STUDENT GROUP, HE HAD NEVER ENCOURAGED OR PARTICIPATED IN ANY STUDENT PROTEST ACTIVITIES, AND THAT SINCE PROCLAMATION OF EMERGENCY MEASURE NINE HE HAD CAUTIONED STUDENTS. THE CARDINAL SAID FURTHER THAT THERE WERE AT PRESENT NO CATHOLIC PRIESTS HELD BY ROKG, AND THAT THE CASES OF SEVERAL PRIESTS WHO HAD REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN HOME GUARD RESERVE DRILLS WAS NOW BEING HELD IN ABEYANCE, DEPENDING ON THEIR FUTURE BEHAVIOR. HOWEVER, HE HAD HEARD THAT A GROUP OF CHRISTIAN STUDENTS INVOLVED IN SNU PROTESTS HAD THEIR FIRST SECRET TRIAL SESSION ON JULY 3. ALTHOUGH RELATIVES WERE INFORMED, THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO ATTEND TRIAL NOR WAS ANY PUBLICITY ALLOWED.

3. CARDINAL THEN TURNED TO GENERAL POLITICAL CLIMATE IN KOREA, SAYING THAT WHILE THERE WAS NO OPEN PROTEST DUE TO GENERAL ATMOSPHERE OF FEAR AND CONCERN, RESENTMENT AND DISTRUST OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS WIDESPREAD. PRESENT SILENCE WAS THE SILENCE OF "QUIET DESPAIR" THE CARDINAL FELT THAT US SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS SITUATION BECAUSE IT COULD AFFECT ITS POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS HERE. HE THEN SAID THAT THERE WAS BELIEF IN MISSIONARY AND CHURCH CIRCLES THAT EMBASSY INTEREST IN INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND CONTACTS WITH CHURCH AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY HAD DIMINISHED.

4. EMBOFF SAID THAT THIS WAS MISCONCEPTION AND THAT NEITHER INTEREST, NOR CONTACTS AND REPORTING IN THESE AREAS HAD CHANGED. AS ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB HAD TESTIFIED BEFORE FRASER COMMITTEE, US GOVT WAS CONCERNED ABOUT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KOREA AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE FACTOR IN US/KOREAN RELATIONS.  
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